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Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7494th meeting
Tuesday, 28 July 2015, 4.50 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Van Bohemen	(New Zealand)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Casimiro
	Chad	Mrs. Alingue
	Chile	Mr. Olguin Cigarroa
	China	Mr. Zhao Yong
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Jordan	Mrs. Kawar
	Lithuania	Mr. Špokauskas
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	Nigeria	Mr. Adamu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 4.50 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: When I last reported on the situation in Yemen, in a closed meeting of the Security Council on my second day in post, on 2 June, I described Yemen as a looming humanitarian catastrophe. By every test, that catastrophe has now loomed, and loomed large. This is an intense disappointment, given the extent of our efforts here at the United Nations and with partners to find ways of alleviating the suffering and the descent into catastrophe.

The dire humanitarian situation in Yemen continues to deteriorate rapidly. With 80 per cent of the population of about 26 million people in need of some kind of humanitarian assistance, and more than 1,895 civilians killed by fighting since March, the impact of this conflict on civilians is indeed catastrophic. Airstrikes hit a residential complex in Mokha on 24 July, killing at least 73 civilians, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Bodies continue to be pulled out of the rubble, and the final death toll is unknown.

A humanitarian pause announced over the weekend has not been respected by any party to the conflict, with airstrikes and ground fighting reported in eight governorates. Since the nominal beginning of the unilateral pause announced by Saudi Arabia, set to begin at a minute before midnight local time last Sunday, coalition airstrikes have been confirmed in Haijah, Lahj, Sa'ada and, most recently, in Sana'a. In Hajjah, an airstrike hit a health centre, killing one person and injuring others. Ground fighting has also been confirmed in Al-Dhale'e, Lahj, Marib and Taizz. Rockets were launched from Houthi/pro-Saleh-held areas of Lahj into neighbouring Aden, prompting return fire by popular committees.

Parties to the conflict continue to fail to meet their responsibilities under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We continue to witness the death and injury of civilians and the destruction of civilian infrastructure, including homes, hospitals, schools, roads and bridges. As of 24 July, health facilities had reported over 4,000 conflict-related deaths, and over 19,800, injuries since 26 March. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reports that 1,895 civilians have been killed and 4,182 injured.

Since March, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Yemen has increased by 33 per cent, from an already staggering 16 million people to more than 21 million in July. The number of those facing food insecurity has risen from 10.6 to 13 million, an increase of 21 per cent. Some aid agencies are now using the term starvation to describe the situation of those most food insecure. Conditions caused by the fighting have contributed to the spread of preventable diseases such as acute diarrhoea, dengue fever and polio. More than 15.2 million people lack access to basic health care, and more than 20 million lack access to safe water.

Commercial imports — which accounted for 90 per cent of Yemen's food and fuel before the conflict — have decreased dramatically. A light, United Nations-led inspections mechanism to enable the flow of commercial imports to increase has long been proposed and is still urgently needed. Negotiations continue.

The Humanitarian Coordinator visited Aden this week, where he witnessed at first-hand the scale of the destruction caused. He described the situation as harrowing.

It is against that backdrop that the international community continues to call for a substantial humanitarian pause that is respected by all parties, that is, an unconditional freeze in the fighting to allow humanitarian actors to reach more people in need — whoever, wherever they are in Yemen and however their need arises — with critically needed assistance.

Humanitarian partners, with the expectation that the planned pause would take hold, had developed an operational plan to reach an additional 3 million people with vital assistance in the initial five-day period, including 3 million people with water and sanitation, 600,000 people with life-saving health care, 3.1 million people with food and 2,200 children under 5-years-old with treatment for acute malnutrition. That plan is live and ready to go now, if only we could get a pause to stick.

With ongoing violence making deliveries dangerous, and with key roads and bridges destroyed, humanitarian access is limited. However, partners continue, amazingly and bravely, to deliver assistance to the people in need whenever and wherever possible, often at great risk to themselves. Yesterday, humanitarian agencies, including the World Food Programme, dispatched food for 62,000 people to Al-Hudaydah, Abyan, Amran, Al-Dhale'e, Lahj and Taizz. In Sa'adah city and the Rahban area, 50,000 people continued to receive water after UNICEF and its partners delivered fuel for the pumping station. In Al-Jawf, four mobile clinics provide nutritional health services. In Aden, humanitarian partners have reopened health facilities that serve 360,000 people, and began a vaccination campaign for 120,000 children. Brilliant as this is, it is a mere fraction of what is needed, and what could and can be delivered, if the violence and fighting paused, preferably ceased.

Recognizing the need to scale up operational presence, the United Nations is establishing five hubs across the country, and international United Nations staff began working in Al-Hudaydah today, the first time that United Nations international staff have been based outside the capital since the start of the conflict. We can go where we have access — there are no partial judgments involved.

Efforts to respond to the overwhelming levels of humanitarian need are woefully underresourced. The humanitarian appeal for Yemen stands at $1.6 billion, of which only 15 per cent — $241 million — has been received. Much has already been spent by United Nations agencies and their partners, who have advanced their own funds in expectation of the original Saudi pledge of $274 million being forthcoming. Additional resources are urgently needed — now.

I wish to inform Council members that I will travel to Yemen in the coming weeks to see for myself the needs of the Yemeni people and the challenges faced in meeting them. This conflict has brought appalling damage on an already suffering people. We must redouble our efforts to secure a pause in the fighting that is adhered to by all parties, to reach all those in need with basic assistance and urgently to give time and space to seek to reach a more durable ceasefire and a political solution.

The President: I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I now give the floo to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Alyemany (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to express the deep appreciation of the Government of Yemen for the tireless efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in following the developments in the crisis in Yemen. I also express our thanks to his Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, who is working continuously in coordination with the Government to find a solution to the catastrophic situation in Yemen due to the coup d'état carried out by Houthi militias and followers of deposed President Saleh, which has led the country into a dark tunnel after having been a model for peaceful political transition.

I should also like to take this opportunity to express my country's appreciation for the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, under the leadership of Mr. Stephen O'Brien, to alleviate the suffering of our people under the unjust siege and barbaric warfare waged by the perpetrators of the coup and their allies against the stoical Yemeni people. We also welcome Mr. O'Brien's impending visit on 9 August.

The liberation of Aden, the temporary capital of Yemen, is an important step towards the restoration of the Government and the resumption of its duties, and in continuing to put pressure on the perpetrators of the coup and their destructive project. We express our thanks and appreciation for the medical and humanitarian assistance that we have received to date. We worked tirelessly with the United Nations to achieve the humanitarian ceasefire that was deliberately and flagrantly violated by the militias. However, the President of the Republic upheld his historic responsibility to the Yemeni people. Having consulted the leaders of the coalition forces, on 26 July he declared a humanitarian ceasefire, which was violated by the Houthis in an attempt to terrorize our courageous people. This morning, we sent a report to the Security Council concerning the violations

committed by the Houthis and their allies on Monday night.

With respect to humanitarian assistance, we thank those who have provided such important help and worked continually to alleviate the suffering of our people. The visit of Mr. Johannes van der Klaauw, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, to the city of Aden over the past two days has given him first-hand experience of the catastrophic situation caused by the perpetrators of the coup.

My country appeals to all States members of the Security Council to bring greater pressure to bear on the perpetrators of the coup to accept the implementation of resolution 2216 (2015), and thanks them all for their united and firm position vis-à-vis the dangerous situation that has prevailed in Yemen ever since the coup of September 2014. The ongoing unity of the Security Council will undoubtedly cause the coup to fail and the relaunch the political process under the auspices of the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism. The way out of this dark tunnel requires resolve on the part of all members of the Council to compel the perpetrators of the coup to cede control of the State institutions to the Yemeni Government and end the crisis.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.